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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [MK](#)
SUBJECT: MACEDONIA PRESENTS ITS ANNUAL NATIONAL PLAN AT NATO

Classified By: Ambassador Kurt Volker
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C/NF) Summary: Macedonia presented its Annual National Program for 2008-2009 to NATO Allies for comment on October ¶6. Greece was less critical than it could have been, but several Allies admonished Macedonia for portraying Greece, in its ANP summary (signed by PM Gruevski), as the lone holdout blocking Macedonian membership. For now, Allies remain generally supportive of membership based on the Bucharest outcome, but Macedonia will have to solve the name issue before the April 2009 NATO Summit or risk a push by some for the reintroduction of performance-based standards as a further measure of eligibility to enter the Alliance. End summary.

¶2. (C/NF) Ambassador Nikola Dimitrov, National Coordinator for NATO Integration presented Macedonia's Annual National Program for 2008-2009 to Allies on October 6. In his presentation Dimitrov focused on Macedonia's willingness to undertake more vigorous reform efforts, which would help develop Macedonia into a fully functioning multiethnic democracy. He underlined Macedonia's commitment to solving the name dispute, reminding NATO representatives that Skopje had accepted the UN mediator's proposals in the run up to the Bucharest Summit. Dimitrov underscored the 85 per cent level of domestic support for NATO membership, even after the disappointments of Bucharest. He emphasized Macedonia's progress in fighting corruption, as well as progress on decentralization, judiciary reform, and criminal justice reform. Acknowledging "certain irregularities" in the May elections, Dimitrov promised that Macedonia would adopt all of the subsequent OSCE recommendations to prevent such problems in the future. Dimitrov also pledged Skopje's political and material commitment to the security of the Balkans region.

¶3. (C/NF) Greek Deputy PermRep Lambridis said Macedonia had made progress in political and defense issues in recent years but had also regressed in other areas. He said that election problems had been a barrier to the normalization of political life and that judicial reform had not made clear progress. He also asserted that anti-corruption efforts must be applicable to everyone in the country. Lambridis hoped that mention of a place name in Greece using the Macedonian name of "Lerin" rather than Greek name of "Florina" in the document had been an inadvertent mistake. Lambridis said the name issue could not be one of "winners and losers." He said that he hoped that once the dispute was solved, cross border attitudes would shift. He wished Dimitrov good luck for his trip to New York to attend the Nimetz talks.

¶4. (C/NF) A/DCM Reid welcomed the Annual National Plan and the frank introduction from Ambassador Dimitrov. He praised Macedonian contributions to ISAF and Iraq missions. He encouraged Macedonia to continue with key reform work, maintain its MOD budget lines, and wished Dimitrov luck in New York.

¶5. (C/NF) Some Allies were at pains to reduce Greek isolation. Portugal, Spain, Italy, France, Germany, and Luxembourg all reminded Macedonia that NATO is a consensus-based organization and the NATO Alliance therefore believes membership is not appropriate until the name issue is solved.

¶6. (C/NF) Turkey, Lithuania, and Poland expressed a strong preference for Macedonia's membership as soon as possible. Estonia, the Netherlands, and Norway hoped the name issue could be solved soon.

¶7. (C/NF) Not all Allied substantive comment was unquestioning. Slovenia insisted that Bucharest does not allow for complacency. Canada asked if the government was preparing the public to accept a possible deal. The Netherlands challenged Macedonia to make the next election flawless. The UK underscored the need for Macedonia to implement the ODIHR electoral recommendations and to depoliticize public appointments.

¶8. (C/NF) Comment: Despite Allied worries, especially relating to apparent declines in defense spending, Macedonia has emerged from this review relatively unscathed. They wisely declined to engage in a debate with the Greeks in front of the Allies, and Allies remained generally positive in their comments. However this should not be seen as indicative of a general willingness at NATO to leave ongoing Macedonian reforms out of the equation when the membership question is next considered. The Bucharest Declaration's provision that the name issue is the last remaining barrier to Macedonia's membership is only guaranteed to last until the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit Declaration in April 2009. Allies were particularly unimpressed with the conduct of the May elections, and some seem likely to want to take a comprehensive look at Macedonia's eligibility again after the name issue is solved. We think we can keep them in line if the name issue is solved before we go to Strasbourg-Kehl. However if the name issue remains when we go to the next Summit, we can expect to deal with a strong push from some to reexamine criteria for membership. End Comment.
REID